



Exploring Your Small Farm Dream

Two 4-session Courses to be offered, one in Greenfield, MA and one in Lowell, MA in March-April 2008 – Sign up now to be sure you can attend!

Are you, or is someone you know considering starting an agricultural enterprise in Massachusetts?

- Do you need to test the feasibility of your idea before you invest?
- Is self employment and an agricultural life style right for you?
- Is there a market for your proposed product or service?
- What regulations will govern your enterprise and impact its cost?
- How will you manage the new risks associated with agriculture?
- How long can you afford to wait to break even– and how much contribution do you expect from this piece of your livelihood?
- Are there others in your family that share your vision and want to join you in its pursuit?
- What are the threats to your success?
- How will you know that you are on a sustainable track?

The *Explorer* Program is intended for those who are considering farming as a (small) business. Its purpose is to help pre-venture, aspiring farmers learn what it would take to start and manage their own commercial agricultural enterprise, and to decide whether this is a path they really want to/can take. *Explorer* makes use of four guided group sessions, an acclaimed workbook, Instructors experienced in starting ag businesses, and extensive supporting resources. The goal of *Explorer* is to help you decide whether starting an agricultural business is right for you and, based on that decision, to help you plan practical next steps. It was created to help you establish the clear vision and goals you will need to guide a new agricultural venture.

This course is sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) Agricultural Business Training Program, in cooperation with the *Explorer* creator, the New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI) in Belchertown.

MDAR is underwriting a portion of the course fee, and will be offering limited additional paid technical assistance to up to four businesses that complete the course and are ready to move to the next step in their plan.

Class size is limited to 14 prospective farms to maximize group time, with the opportunity to bring another person from your enterprise if space allows.

The registration cost of \$125 includes all materials, guest speakers, access to the in-class library as well as NESFI's extensive library in Belchertown, and (for the selected 4 members of the class) an extra boost from targeted help on a key next step.

You must have email and web access to take this course effectively!

More information about the basic NESFI Explorer course is available on their website at:

<http://www.smallfarm.org/explorer/index.htm>

For a Registration Form, please contact:

Rick Chandler, MDAR, 25 West Experiment Station, UMass, Amherst, MA 01003

Email: rhandler@umext.umass.edu

Phone: 413-577-0459

NOTES:

If you would like to take advantage of MDAR's other offerings in **agricultural business planning for established farms**, we are also offering our 10-session NxLevel Course "Tilling the Soil of Opportunity" in January-March 2008. Please call to receive information and registration materials.

Because this course is sponsored and financially supported by a Massachusetts state agency, If you are from another state or are planning to farm in another state, we can put you on a waiting list in case the course does not fill with in-state enterprises/residents. If you are then accepted, the fee will be \$200 and you will not be eligible for the paid post course technical assistance.